

Proposed Rules – Chapter 390-17 WAC
For public hearing and possible permanent adoption on April 27, 2006.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 04-12-056, filed 5/28/04, effective 6/28/04)

WAC 390-17-030 Sample ballots and slate cards. (1) **Intent.** The commission finds that, under certain conditions, expenditures for slate cards and other candidate listings fall within the scope of RCW 42.17.640 (14)(a) and are, therefore, exempt from contribution limits and eligible for payment with a bona fide political party's exempt funds. Slate cards and other candidate listings remain reportable under chapter 42.17 RCW and subject to the political advertising provisions of the law.

The purpose of this exemption from the contribution limits is to allow political parties and other sponsors to tell the general public which candidates they support. The exemption is not intended as a device to circumvent the contribution limits and full reporting requirements by undertaking any degree of significant campaigning on behalf of candidates.

(2) For purposes of RCW 42.17.020(21) and 42.17.640 (14)(a), "**sample ballots**" means slate cards, or other candidate listings, whether written or oral, that satisfy the qualifying criteria specified in subsection (10) of this section.

(3) Sample ballots constitute political advertising for a slate or list of candidates and must be properly identified and otherwise in compliance with the (~~political advertising~~) provisions(~~(7)~~) of RCW (~~(42.17.505)~~) 42.17.510 through 42.17.550.

(4)(a) **A bona fide political party** may use contributions it receives pursuant to RCW 42.17.640(14) to produce and distribute sample ballots.

(b) Expenditures for sample ballots do not count against a bona fide political party's contribution limit to the candidates listed on the sample ballot. Further, when reporting sample ballot expenditures, a bona fide political party is not required to attribute a portion of the expenditure to each of the candidates listed on the sample ballot, but the names of the candidates must be reported along with the other information required by chapter 42.17 RCW and chapter 390-17 WAC.

(5) **Any person**, as defined by RCW 42.17.020, who makes an expenditure for sample ballots has made an expenditure that does not count against that person's contribution limit to the candidates listed.

(6) **An in-state political committee**, when disclosing expenditures for sample ballots as part of its C-4 report, is not required to attribute a portion of the expenditure to the

candidates listed on the sample ballot, but the names of the candidates and their respective party affiliations must be reported along with other information required by chapter 42.17 RCW and chapter 390-17 WAC.

(7) **An out-of-state committee**, when disclosing expenditures for sample ballots on a C-5 report, is not required to allocate a portion of the expenditure to the candidates listed on the sample ballot, but must report that an expenditure for sample ballots was made, the name and address of the person to whom the expenditure was made, the full amount of the expenditure, and the name, office sought and party affiliation of each candidate listed on the sample ballot. The report is due no later than the 20th day of the month following the month in which the expenditure was made.

(8) If a **lobbyist or lobbyist employer** makes expenditures for sample ballots, those expenditures are required to be reported in detail on the lobbyist's monthly L-2 report. Itemization of these expenditures must include the names and respective party affiliations of the candidates listed on the sample ballot, but no portion of the expenditure need be allocated to individual candidates listed on the sample ballot.

(9) **The candidates listed on a sample ballot** are not required to report any portion of the expenditure as an in-kind contribution to their campaigns.

(10) **Qualifying criteria for sample ballots, slate cards and other candidate listings.** In order not to count against a person's contribution limit to the candidates listed on a sample ballot and, in the case of a bona fide political party, in order to be eligible for payment with contributions received pursuant to RCW 42.17.640(14), a sample ballot must satisfy **all** of the criteria in (a) through (d) of this subsection.

(a) The sample ballot must list the names of at least three candidates for election to public office in Washington state and be distributed in a geographical area where voters are eligible to vote for at least three candidates listed. The candidate listing may include any combination of three or more candidates, whether the candidates are seeking federal, state or local office in Washington.

(b) The sample ballot must not be distributed through public political advertising; for example, through broadcast media, newspapers, magazines, billboards or the like. The sample ballot may be distributed through direct mail, telephone, electronic mail, Web sites, electronic bulletin boards, electronic billboards or personal delivery by volunteers.

(c) The content of a sample ballot is limited to:

- The identification of each candidate (pictures may be used);
- The office or position currently held;
- The office sought;

- Party affiliation; and
- Information about voting hours and locations.

Therefore, the sample ballot must exclude any additional biographical data on candidates and their positions on issues as well as statements about the sponsor's philosophy, goals or accomplishments. The list must also exclude any statements, check marks or other indications showing support of or opposition to ballot propositions.

(d) The sample ballot is a stand-alone political advertisement. It must not be a portion of a more comprehensive message or combined in the same mailing or packet with any other information, including get-out-the-vote material, candidate brochures, or statements about the sponsor's philosophy, goals or accomplishments. On Web sites, electronic bulletin boards or electronic billboards, the sample ballot must be a separate document.

Brief Explanation: *Sample ballots and slate cards are excluded in statute from the definition of electioneering communications. The existing rule relating to sample ballots and slate cards is amended to assist sponsors of this type of advertising in determining when their advertising is exempt from reporting as an electioneering communication.*

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 02-12-007, filed 5/23/02, effective 6/23/02)

WAC 390-17-060 Exempt activities--Definitions, reporting.

(1)(a) "Exempt contributions" are contributions made to a political committee which are earmarked for exempt activities as described in RCW 42.17.640 (14)(a) and (b). Such contributions are required to be reported under RCW 42.17.090, are subject to the restrictions in RCW 42.17.105(8), but are not subject to the contribution limits in RCW 42.17.640. Any written solicitation for exempt contributions must be so designated. Suggested designations are "not for individual candidates" or "for exempt activities."

(b) Contributions made to a caucus political committee, to a candidate or candidate's authorized committee which are earmarked for voter registration, absentee ballot information, get-out-the-vote campaigns, sample ballots are presumed to be for the purpose of promoting individual candidates and are subject to the contribution limits in RCW 42.17.640.

(c) Contributions made to a caucus political committee, to a candidate or candidate's authorized committee which are earmarked for internal organization expenditures or fund-raising are presumed to be with direct association with individual candidates and are subject to the contribution limits in RCW

42.17.640.

(2) "Exempt contributions account" is the separate bank account into which only exempt contributions are deposited and out of which only expenditures for exempt activities shall be made.

(3) "Exempt activities" are those activities referenced in RCW 42.17.640(14) as further clarified by subsections (4), (5), (6), and (7) of this section (~~and by the Washington state supreme court's decision regarding issue advocacy in Washington State Republican Party v. Washington State Public Disclosure Commission et al., 141 Wn.2d 245, 4 P.3d 808 (2000))~~). Only exempt activities are eligible for payment with exempt contributions.

(4)(a) Except as permitted by WAC 390-17-030, Sample ballots and slate cards, activities referenced in RCW 42.17.640 (14)(a) that promote or constitute political advertising for one or more clearly identified candidates do not qualify as exempt activities.

(b) A candidate is deemed to be clearly identified if the name of the candidate is used, a photograph or likeness of the candidate appears, or the identity of the candidate is apparent by unambiguous reference.

(5) Activities referenced in RCW 42.17.640 (14)(a) that do not promote, or constitute political advertising for, one or more clearly identified candidates qualify as exempt activities. For example, get-out-the-vote telephone bank activity that only encourages persons called to "vote republican" or "vote democratic" in the upcoming election may be paid for with exempt contributions regardless of the number of candidates who are benefited by this message.

(6)(a) "Internal organization expenditures" referenced in RCW 42.17.640 (14)(b) are expenditures for organization purposes, including legal and accounting services, rental and purchase of equipment and office space, utilities and telephones, postage and printing of newsletters for the organization's members or contributors or staff when engaged in organizational activities such as those previously listed, all without direct association with individual candidates.

(b) "Fund-raising expenditures" referenced in RCW 42.17.640 (14)(b) are expenditures for fund-raising purposes, including facilities for fund-raisers, consumables furnished at the event and the cost of holding social events and party conventions, all without direct association with individual candidates.

(c) If expenditures made pursuant to subsections (a) and (b) above are made in direct association with individual candidates, they shall not be paid with exempt contributions.

(7) For purposes of RCW 42.17.640 (14)(a) and this section, activities that oppose one or more clearly identified candidates are presumed to promote the opponent(s) of the candidate(s)

opposed.

Brief Explanation: Exempt funds -- the contributions received by bona fide political party committees that are not subject to limit -- may only be spent for qualifying exempt activities. By passing ESSB 5034, the Legislature removed "issue ads" as a permissible soft money expense. The rule amendment implements this legislative change.

NEW SECTION

WAC 390-17-410 Electioneering communications may constitute contributions and be subject to limit. (1)
Electioneering communications are contributions when they satisfy the definition of contribution in RCW 42.17.020(15) or 42.17.570.

(2) Contributions are subject to all applicable provisions of chapter 42.17 RCW and Title 390 WAC, including RCW 42.17.105(8) and 42.17.640.

Brief Explanation: If an electioneering communication expense is undertaken after the sponsor consulted with the candidate benefitted by the ad (or otherwise satisfied the definition of contribution), then the expense constitutes a contribution and is subject to any applicable restriction, limit or reporting. The rule gives clear notice to persons paying for electioneering communications that they need to make their expense without any assistance or direction from the campaign benefitted or they are in jeopardy of making an over-limit contribution or otherwise violating the law.